

HINDUISM

Paper 8058/01
Paper 1

Key Messages

- For **Section A**, all three of the Vedic gods Agni, Indra and Varuna should be studied, so that comparisons can be made, if this is what the question requires. Good translations of Vedic hymns to these gods are widely available and should form a sound basis for answers to any questions on these particular gods.
- For **Section B**, the stories of the main characters in the epics must be studied in relation to principles such as *dharma*, as indicated in the Syllabus. 'Telling the story' on its own is not sufficient for the award of good marks.
- For **Section C**, candidates should have read a selection of the poetry of the Alvars, Tulsidasa and Surdasa, in order to answer questions about the *bhakti* of these saint-poets. Good translations of these works are widely available and are the only way to provide insight into the authors' devotion to God. Candidates should avoid phrases such as '*bhakti* is a means and an end'; unless they can show that they understand what is meant by this.

In all answers candidates should avoid introductory general paragraphs which are not required such as explanations of what Upanishads are, or what the Mahabharata is about.

General Comments

Some very good answers involved candidates demonstrating a clear, in-depth understanding of what the question was asking of them. Candidates who did well were able to include their own opinion and expand on their own, personal views. Most candidates seemed to have prepared adequately for the examination and tackled it confidently.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Those candidates who were able to include a reference to *ṛta*, gained the higher marks. There were very few references to the Vedic hymns in which Varuna is invoked by worshippers – it is worth noting that these are important passages which should be included in answers to gain marks. It is also important to note that those candidates who took time to read the question and digest what was being asked of them did better. Candidates would benefit from practising past questions in a classroom environment to become familiar with what is being asked of them. Again those candidates who were able to make a comparison with Agni and Indra did well. Candidates should be careful not to confuse Varuna with Vayu.

Question 2

Most candidates who attempted this question had some knowledge of the set text and were able to refer to the main ideas such as *tapas*. Those candidates who were able to confidently reference the important 'agnostic' element which makes this a 'creation' sukta of outstanding interest did well and generally gained higher marks. Some candidates effectively contrasted this passage with other creation narratives such as the idea of the Purusha as creator. This demonstrated sophisticated answers.

Question 3

This was the most popular question in **Section A**, with many candidates showing the ability to discuss the main religious ideas in the Katha Upanishad rather than only telling the story. There were some excellent responses. Those candidates who scored more highly were able to engage with the question and appreciate the significance of Nachiketas as a seeker after truth. Candidates could, for example, have discussed the significance of his youth, his mature insight, his spiritual awareness, and his persistence in asking Yama the difficult question concerning the soul's journey after death.

Section B

Question 4

Those candidates who were able to go beyond simply giving a narrative of the events did better than those who simply gave a story of events. Responses who were mainly narrative could have improved by including moral concepts such as truth-telling and promise-keeping. Candidates who demonstrated their understanding of the principles of *karma* and *dharma* earned marks. Some answers were very insightful, showing appreciation of the Ramayana characters' moral dilemmas, and of the 'ripple effect' resulting from their actions and decisions.

Question 5

The majority of candidates concentrated on describing Draupadi as a 'feisty' feminist. Many answers appeared to be reproducing prepared material comparing Draupadi with Sita and could have gained more marks by expanding and giving their own opinion. There was reference to the *dharma* of Draupadi in some answers and those who were able to elaborate on gained the higher marks. Some candidates made a stronger case by showing when and how Draupadi followed her *dharma*.

Question 6

Candidates seemed to have a relatively good understanding of the set text of the Bhagavad Gita. Those candidates who focused too much on the narrative concerning the battle and/or paraphrasing of quotations (of Krishna's teaching), which were correct, achieved marks but needed to deviate from simply giving a story. It was noticeable that a number of candidates spent a large amount of time writing about the concept of soul/body. Most were able to show understanding of, for example, *swadharma*, *nishkama karma* and *adharma*. Some reference could have been made to Chapter 9 on *varnadharma*. Those candidates who could demonstrate an understanding of Krishna's teaching that love for him can lead to acceptance even when a person falls short in the fulfilment of *dharma* gained marks.

Section C

Question 7

There were some excellent answers, where candidates showed that they had studied the Alvars and other medieval bhakti saints with care, and with knowledge of the outstanding themes of their songs and poetry. Those candidates who were able to achieve the higher marks went beyond simply referring to Tulsidasa and Surdasas and were able to discuss, in detail their ideas and teachings. Candidates could go beyond the two poets and consider others thought of as bhakti saints.

Question 8

Candidates usually had a general understanding of Tulsidasa's aims and his devotion to Rama. It must be noted that those candidates who were able to go beyond simply reiterating the basic information about the teachings of Tulsidasa gained the higher marks. Those candidates who discussed both the central and very

individual approach to worship (the efficacy of the Name of Rama) which appears so vividly, particularly in the Ramcaritamanas, a text widely accessible to all candidates gained the highest marks

Question 9

Answers to this question were often good. Candidates needed to get directly to the question. Candidates could have improved needed to remember not to spend too much time discussing stories of Surdasa's life and/or repeating their notes on the poet's work in general. The best answers were those which showed ability to select material on being 'friends' with God. Candidates did especially well when they showed that they had read some of Surdasa's poetry rather than confining their study to notes about his *bhakti*.

Section D

Question 10

There were some very good answers in the sense that some candidates had excellent knowledge of Rammohan Roy's biography and his reforming interests. Those candidates who were able to reference the practices and worship of the Brahma Samaj did well. This institution showed that Roy had very clear ideas about how and why God should be worshipped, though arguably his zeal for social reform was uppermost in his thinking. It is important to note that candidates who spent time reading the question and understanding what was being asked of them did the best.

Question 11

There were some very good responses and those candidates who were able to move beyond the repetition of class or textbook notes gained the highest marks. The best answers recognised that Dayananda's work, preaching and writings, though very influential in their time, had also been controversial and remain both influential and controversial among Hindus today. Those answers that could give more than one perspective and consider conflicting opinions tended to gain more marks.

Question 12

This question was not as popular as some other questions. Some candidates did exceptionally well and it was those answers who gave an array of differing perspectives which achieved the best marks. Candidates needed to show recognition of the importance of the outstanding personality of Ramakrishna, in his reported sayings and in his continued legacy as promoted by disciples such as Vivekananda.